

lesser woolly horseshoe bat, on the basis of its large size, colour, habitat and solitary occurrence.

I had an occasion to visit Chinnar again in June 1998. I found a bat, presumably the same individual, roosting at the same place as it had been doing nine months earlier. Even with a moderately bright torch, no further details could be noted to ascertain its identity. I was, however, able to photograph it using a flash this time.

The photograph strengthens the impression that the bat is indeed a lesser woolly horseshoe bat. The animal is seen to be hanging by one leg, which is a habit characteristic of that species. Further, Dr. Paul Bates, who studied this picture wrote that he thought it was *Rhinolophus beddomei*.

The lesser woolly horseshoe bat is endemic to peninsular India and Sri Lanka. In Kerala, it has hitherto been recorded from Wynaad, Tellicherry, Trichur district and Palghat. This report constitutes a possible new record of a species which has been described as very vulnerable to habitat destruction on account of low density populations and forest dependency.

On a later visit to the same place in February 1999, I could not find any bat.

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3. DEAD SNOW LEOPARD *UNCIA UNCIA* AT YABUK, DONGKUNG (5500M) IN NORTH SIKKIM

Snow leopard *Uncia uncia* is protected in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as amended upto 1998. There are almost no recent sight records of this rare big cat from Sikkim, the last being a cub from Sebu La region in Lashar valley, north Sikkim. The male cub 'Shebu' survived for less than a year in captivity in Gangtok in 1993-1994. There has been no study so far on its present status in Sikkim.

On November 18, 1998, a Tibetan grazier or 'dokpa' was attracted by a hovering raven while grazing his yaks at Yabuk (c. 5500m), a rocky place about 2 km above Dongkung, at the foot of Chomiomo peak on the Chho Lhamo Plateau. Upon investigating, he saw what he thought was a sleeping, probably sick, snow leopard in the grass at the base of some large boulders. Sensing something was wrong, he drove away the raven and went closer. He found it was an adult male snow leopard lying dead in sleeping posture. The spot was very isolated and intending to return the next day to collect the specimen to bring down to me in Gangtok, he went back to his camp.

Unfortunately feral dogs discovered the carcass. The next day, most of the softer parts, the internal organs and the ribs had been eaten away. The grazier collected the remains. Almost in the same sleeping posture, most of the carcass except the head and shoulders dried naturally in the cold of this desert area. Six months later, on May 16, 1999, he brought the remains down to Gangtok in a highly decomposed state and deposited them in the Wildlife Circle of the Department of Forests, Environment & Wildlife. The heat accelerated putrefaction and we tried to save the specimen as much as possible by skinning. On examining the jaws of the snow leopard, we saw that the upper left canine was missing, as was one incisor in the upper jaw. The other teeth were also worn out and yellow. The claws were blunt. The front pad in the pug measured 8.5 cm and the hind, 8 cm. The tail measured 92 cm and had a diameter of c. 13 cm. The bones were buried in the ground to remove the tissue. They were later cleaned and measured (Table 1).

TABLE I
SKULL MEASUREMENTS OF SNOW LEOPARD (IN MM)

Total length	171	
Condylbasal length	145	
Zygomatic width	122.5	
Post Orbital Width	44.9	
Inter Orbital Width	40	
Maxillary Width	72.5	
Mandibular Length	115.2	
	Upper jaw	Lower jaw
Premolar 4	13.88	16.1
Molar 1	21.25	16.15

The 'dokpa' grazier had two previous sightings of snow leopard in this area. On July 27, 1998 it was sighted at Dongkung. It was last seen alive at Yabuk on September 10, 1998. He also recorded sightings of upto 30 blue sheep *Pseudois nayaur* in this area. Around 1100 yak and 2000 sheep belonging to 18 'dokpa' families also use the area.

Feral dogs have long infested the entire area where this animal was found. These dogs were brought to the Tibetan plateau as pups from lower altitudes by the army jawans for company. On finishing their stint in this 'difficult area' all the dogs were abandoned. These have since bred with the local Tibetan mastiff and multiplied by feeding off the kitchen wastes of the army camps. Today these feral dogs roam in packs on the plateau, living off marmots, woolly hare, Tibetan gazelle, blue sheep, young nayan and kiang as also domestic sheep, goats and young yak

including those animals which have been lamed by landmines. Usually nothing is done to control their number. Needless to say, pure breed of Tibetan mastiff, which is a master herder, also seems to have been irretrievably lost. It is difficult to quantify the feral dog population as the entire area, though under the jurisdiction of the Department of F. E. & WL, is under defence control, where civilian activities are severely and actively restricted.

All wildlife and domestic livestock on the Tibetan plateau of Sikkim are under severe stress due to various defence priorities. This area, known as the Chho Lhamo plateau, is perhaps the only one in the entire eastern and central Himalayas to have breeding populations of endangered species such as the southern kiang *Equus kiang polyodon*, lynx *Lynx lynx* and blacknecked crane *Grus nigricollis*, in addition to snow leopard — all listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act. The richness of the region has prompted the State Wildlife Advisory Board to propose its recognition as a cold desert protected area.

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4. ON THE LONGEVITY OF THE TIGER (*PANTHERA TIGRIS*) IN CAPTIVITY

A white tigress named Diana-Subhra born at the National Zoological Park, New Delhi, on June 6, 1977, was received at the Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, on December 28, 1979. She died on February 28, 1999, after remaining 21 years, 8 months and 22 days in captivity.

The tigress was housed in an open-air enclosure with suitable vegetation. The enclosure had a set of retiring cells with cemented floor

for protection from extreme weather conditions and for feeding. She was fed with 14 kg of fresh raw beef with bones six days in a week. Intermittently, vitamin supplements were added to the beef. She was usually caged with her mate or her cubs.

During her lifetime in the park, she was paired with two tigers (one heterozygous normal coloured "Deepak" and one white "Debabrata") and she gave birth to 16 cubs (6 males and 10